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The product of a two-day symposium on children and children's books, this booklet features remarks of Elaine Moss, British author and critic, and Barbara Rollock, coordinator for children's services at the New York Public Library. Moss's speech discusses meeting children's need for books offering depth and involvement, while Rollock's talk explores obstacles and incitements to reading and examines the character of the young reading audience. The booklet concludes with brief remarks by three commentators: Cecily Truett, associate producer of "Studio See," South Carolina Educational Television; Ann Durell, vice president of children's books for E.P. Dutton; and Ethel Heins, editor of the "Horn Book Magazine." (MM)

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The Audience for Children's Books

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PREFACE

The Library of Congress commemorated the International Year of the Child, 1979, in several ways, and the March 12-13 program on the audience for children's books, sponsored by the Library's Center for the Book and its Children's Literature Center, was part of the celebration. The topic was addressed on March 12 by two distinguished speakers: British author and critic Elaine Moss and Barbara Rollock, coordinator of children's services at the New York Public Library. The next day the speakers participated in a lively discussion with an audience of librarians, educators, publishers, booksellers, and members of the general public. The discussion was moderated by Robert Hale, associate executive director of the American Booksellers Association, and included brief remarks by three commentators: Cecily Truett, associate producer of "Studio See," South Carolina Educational Television; Ann Durell, vice president, children's books, E. P. Dutton; and Ethel L. Heins, editor, The Horn Book Magazine. *The Center for the Book is pleased to make the talks of the two speakers, the remarks of the commentators, and a note on the discussion available to a wide audience.*

This program was the first symposium sponsored jointly by the Center for the Book and the Children's Literature Center. Another collaborative effort of the two organizations is the annual Children's Book Week lecture held at the Library of Congress each November. The Children's Literature Center, which is headed by Virginia Haviland, was established in 1962. It provides reference, research, and bibliographical services to children's librarians, government officials, educators, scholars, publishers, writers, illustrators, and the general public. The center's bibliographical services are known throughout the world, largely because of publications such as its annual list of recommended children's books and its Children's Literature: A Guide to Reference Sources.

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress was established by an Act of Congress, Public Law 95-129, approved on October 13, 1977. Its purpose is to stimulate appreciation of the essential role of the book and the printed word—past, present, and future. It is a privately funded organization that draws on the resources of the Library of Congress as it works with organizations throughout the book and educational communities to promote books and reading. Its goal is to serve as a useful catalyst among authors, publishers, librarians, booksellers, educators, and readers. *Contributions to the Center for the Book, which are tax deductible, are welcome.*

Proposals for Center for the Book lectures, seminars, programs, and research projects should be sent to the executive director. The interests of the center include the educational and cultural role of the book; the history of books and printing; the future of the book, especially as it relates to new technologies and other media; the international flow of books; authorship and writing; the publishing, design, production, and preservation of books; the distribution, access, and use of books and printed materials; reading; literacy; and the institutions of the book world. Volumes based on its first two seminars, Television, the Book, and the Classroom *(1978) and* Reading in America 1978 *(1979) are now available. Each may be purchased for $4.95, prepaid, from the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.*

John Y. Cole
Executive Director
The Center for the Book

THE AUDIENCE FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

Remarks by
ELAINE MOSS

When the invitation to take part in this symposium on *The Audience for Children's Books* arrived in London, I was filled with conflicting emotions. One of them was an overwhelming sense of the honor the Library of Congress and the Center for the Book were conferring upon me by asking me to be the British voice at this meeting, their contribution to the events that mark the International Year of the Child. Another was a feeling that the wheel of fate plays some very strange tricks.

For, until a short time ago, my involvement with children and books in Britain had always been an involvement, either personal or through my pen, with children and with books themselves. Invitations to speak to adult groups, professional or parent, were turned down, always. Then in 1974 I agreed with some trepidation to talk for just ten minutes to a private meeting of a Youth Libraries branch of the Library Association. The subject on which I felt so strongly that my fears of public speaking were pushed aside was, as I dubbed it, "The Adult-eration of Children's Books."

I wished to draw the attention of publishers and librarians

to the upward spiral in so-called "children's" literature which was resulting, in my view, in an increasing number of children's authors writing technically ingenious novels for literary adolescents. These novels, of which Alan Garner's *Red Shift* is a prime example, were attracting great blocks of the limited review space on the *children's* book pages of national newspapers, and in specialist journals. If publishers and authors were immune to such coverage all would be well. But because they are not there was, I could perceive, the onset of a gravitation among authors and publishers away from writing and publishing stories for the younger child—stories that would one day turn him or her into a happy, perceptive reader—toward this new genre.

It was that brief discourse, subsequently published in *Signal* that was responsible, I believe, for my swift elevation to this great platform in your unique and wonderful Library.

This Library is not, as I understand it, an elitist institution reserved for senators, congressmen, and scholars, but a library for ordinary citizens too. So I need not, I think, apologize for bringing children in among you tonight. Indeed, we all belong together, the adult, the child, and his book.

And where better to begin than with Robert Louis Stevenson, a British author who drew our two nations together when he dedicated his best known work, *Treasure Island*, to Lloyd Osborne, his stepson—"an American gentleman." This American gentleman was, I once read, aged between ten and twelve when he and his stepfather were at work creating Long John Silver, Israel Hands, and the rest of the colorful crew of the *Hispaniola*. Between ten and twelve. As this talk turns full circle, I shall suggest that the proper audience for all real children's books is aged about eleven.

But let us stay with Stevenson for a moment and listen to the verses he wrote for English children in Victorian times, years before jet travel forced the layman to come to terms physically with the movement of the planets.

When at eve I rise from tea,
Day dawns beyond the Atlantic Sea,

And all the children in the West
Are getting up and being dressed.

Stevenson's poem, with its cozy vision of "each little Indian sleepy-head . . . being kissed and put to bed" is a far cry from the United Nations' concern with the practical realities of childhood as seen by today's sun "as round the World his way he makes." The purpose of the International Year of the Child is to focus on deprivation among the world's children. This trans-Atlantic seminar concentrates on food not for the child's body but for his mind, and in particular on books for children in the English language.

In its title "The *Audience* for Children's Books," this symposium invites, if I am not mistaken, comment on the scope of, and readership for, the vast number of books that make up the profitable children's book market in the United States and in Great Britain.

About the situation in the United States I know almost nothing, since knowing for me is always practical experience, and until this visit I had only been in America for a fortnight —and that, technically (despite happy visits to the Children's Book Council in New York and to the Children's Book Division here in the Library of Congress), was a holiday. True, the shelves of the garden room in which I work at home are lined with large volumes of erudite essays on children's literature from the United States. At one point, terrified of appearing before you ignorant, I was tempted to reread (or, dare I say it, in some cases read for the first time) these monuments of considered and considerable American opinion. Then I decided, no. You had, I think, invited me here to share with you my experience of working in the children's book sphere in Britain.

And here we are back again, with the word sphere, to the circular concept. Speaking in the Library of Congress, itself a massive encyclopedia of world knowledge, with its great circular Main Reading Room, the concept is apt. Particularly so because I intend to concentrate my remarks on one word—*audience:* This word *audience* will be the hub of the wheel;

each line of thought will radiate outward from the word toward what is necessarily, in so short a paper, a limited circumference. But surely I need not remind a people whose history and psychology are governed by the frontier and the covered wagon that wheels, once fashioned, roll . . .

Tonight you are my audience. In today's society the opportunities for listening quietly to words diminish year by year. We live in a world that is increasingly and obtrusively noisy. But even if it were quiet, the impact of the word is being eroded by other forms of communication. By the picture—electronic and printed—obviously; but also by the deductions of the exact and social sciences. If these are expressed in words at all, they are expressed in words that are only understood, only meant to be understood, by the small charmed circle of the initiated.

It is, I think, deplorable but understandable (because the children's book world is part of the real world), that in the discussions that go on year in, year out in journals either directly or indirectly concerned with children and reading, a thorny hedge of terminology (borrowed from psychological, educational, linguistic, political, and sociological jargon) has also grown up.

Inside that hedge of thorns, sad to tell, lies the Sleeping Beauty—children's books. Outside—even sadder to reveal—armed not with the gleaming sword of the handsome and determined Prince in the fairy tale but with heavy textbooks designed for college students or works of criticism for scholars, stand the bewildered teachers and parents, defeated before they begin. That there is a Sleeping Beauty—a rich children's literature that is the rightful heritage of every child—they know because they have heard rumors in the village. That they are the Princes whose privilege it is to mediate that literature to the children in their lives, many cannot accept. Do they refuse the undertaking because of, or despite, the specialist?

I am aware, acutely aware, that even those who know about the Sleeping Beauty and wish to wake her and share her gifts with the young have been made to feel so insecure by the outpourings of many of us that, rather than sample directly for themselves the children's books that abound, they take refuge in the safe, sad reading schemes. About these the commercial world, having conducted its market research, speaks out plainly. Back to basics: You Need These. The result? Children today call their reading scheme pamphlets their "books," and teachers talk about picture books and children's novels as "supplementary reading material."

Shame on us! It is our sophistication that has cut us off from the very audience we, as critics, reviewers (*commentators* is the word I honestly prefer in this context), need to reach: the audience in a working situation. For though there is a good case for stretching the intellectual faculties of the university student with academic treatises on various aspects of children's literature, we cannot expect any but the exceptional practicing teacher in primary education to keep abreast of current theory.

The sad aspect of this dichotomy is that the student, lacking practical experience of children with books, will not find it easy to absorb in a creative way the academic treatises he reads, whereas the teacher with that practical experience only has time, generally speaking, to read straightforward comment if he is also to sample at least some of the new books. If we care deeply, can we not learn to speak plainly? Great thoughts have been expressed in Haiku. It is the spillover of academic parlance and lengthy argument into comment directed at teachers, among others, that is the thorny content of the forbidding hedge.

In any case we have yet, I think, to devise good criteria for examining an art form brought into being by the existence of a group—the children in our society—of which the critic is not part. As long ago as 1906, a lady called Eveline C. Godley, considering this situation in the course of looking back on the books she read as a child, remarked: "Our attitude towards

what we read is so entirely changed: there is all the difference between surveying a country from a height, and exploring it in detail." [1]

That the terrain as Eveline Godley envisages it should be there, stretched out before all child explorers, is our main concern. For once children have flown on the gander's wings with Mother Goose, walked in the forests with the Brothers Grimm, or plunged into the Golden River kingdom with John Ruskin, attained with our guidance the literary foothills, Parnassus, should they desire it, is theirs.

But how can we help to ensure that the child audience for children's books is wide, lively, and abundantly served with the huge variety of stories that can alone give children the confidence and experience they need in order to begin to climb?

Let us now leave the audience for children's book *criticism* —vital to our subject this evening, for without informed adults in the field there is little hope that we shall have entranced children—and begin to think about the child audience for children's stories.

We have, in Britain, a radio program called *Listen with Mother*, an old-fashioned title which embodies a sound (in every sense of the word) idea. You need, if you are of preschool age (which for us is under five years old), to sit comfortably with an adult in order to listen—to the radio, to a cassette, or to a story being read directly to you from a book. Listening effectively at any age is an active, not a passive, occupation. The audience for a story read aloud must work far harder than the viewer who has the same story told with moving pictures on television. The audience for a story told in words—the way stories have come down to us since time immemorial—must be a weaver of dreams, a painter of pictures, a creative artist akin to the filmmaker. Every child born with normal faculties is naturally all these things, internally. But batter that child with crude, flickering images from morn-

ing till night and he will lose the great imaginative gifts that have been bestowed on him. Secondhand images will vie with, then vanquish, the self-generated.

Why, then, do we value the picture book so highly? At its most basic, the picture book offers the child a rare commodity: a still picture that he can look at for as long as he is able—which is often no time at all, until one has helped him to slow down his expectation for constant movement and replace it with the excitement of discovery in depth.

The great picture books of the last twenty years are great not because they confine the child's vision to the limits of the story but because they invite the child *in*, to roam about inside the picture—of Max's room, perhaps, "in which a forest grew and grew—and grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around." Sometimes, the pictures give the listening child an altogether different facet of the story from the text. Anyone reading the purposely pedestrian thirty-two words of Pat Hutchins's *Rosie's Walk* to a group of children is made fully aware by the audience that the excitement is in the pictures; for Rosie the hen, all unknowing, is being followed, in those *pictures*, "across the yard, round the pond, through the fence . . ." by a red-brown animal with crafty eyes and a bushy tail whose species is not so much as hinted at in the text. But clamoring children insist that the reader-aloud should know what is *really* happening in *their* story.

Their story. Involvement is all. Involvement and sharing the excitement of involvement, in the early years and to some extent the later ones, with a parent, a teacher, a librarian, or another child.

Reading aloud to children seems to me to be the key to children's pleasure in books at all ages. There was once a time when families were natural reading circles, and a few such families still exist, but the clock will not be put back. We have now to use the classroom and the library—less cozy than the fireside—as the minstrel's hearth.

In the primary school where I work just once a week as

librarian (Britain does not have professional librarians in primary schools, generally speaking), reading aloud to each class once or twice a day has become established by the teachers as a valuable activity for the audience.

Sometimes it is my privilege to read aloud, to tell stories, or to talk about books with children of any age from five to eleven. I have been at this school for almost three years now, and I am sure that I have learned more about what we are all doing—or trying to do—with children's books from the children I now know so well, than ever I've learned from reading theses.

If you listen to children talking about stories and pictures, you begin to approach, for the second time in your life, children's books at ground level. And once your rheumaticky knees have bent, if you are prepared to follow along the children's own paths in a kind of healthy partnership, you will arrive with them at their personal crossroads. Then you can decide together that they should take the road to *Green Knowe*, to *Narnia*, to *Elidor*—to *Tom's Midnight Garden*, to *The House of Wings*, or to the *Shores of Silver Lake*. So often, it seems, the adult approaches the child's crossroads from the North and meets head-on, or at best, sideways on, a reader traveling from the South, East, or West. Being on the same road, even if (as is most likely) it is a road bordered by comics, sports papers, and Scarry, and paved by Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and The Famous Five, establishes, among your traveling companions, the confidence they need to have in you (as someone who at least recognizes the landmarks in their terrain) if you are going to act as guide. If you consistently take the high road, while they take the low, it is quite probable that you will stay at different levels forever.

It was Richard Hoggart who made the seminal observation that the "strongest objection to the more trivial entertainments is not that they prevent their readers from becoming high-brow, but that they make it harder for people without an intellectual bent to become wise in their own way." [2] Children always read for the story, and the trivial, accessible writers

like Keene, Dixon, and Blyton are simply providing what children like (a fast-moving story with a heroic hero or heroine) without also providing the vitamins they need but do not know they need.

What happens next in a story written by a mature writer for a child of any age depends not on the author's whim but on the interrelationship he has built up between the characters, their attitude to circumstance, their reasoning, their quirks of personality. It was no mere accident that Peter Rabbit landed up in that watering-can, nor was it luck that enabled Karana to survive on the *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. A child of eleven (do you remember the age of Robert Louis Stevenson's American gentleman?) will, in the right conditions, draw nourishment from both these stories, but it is quite likely that that child will either not have access to, or not recognize, these diverse sources of pleasure and growth unless there is an informed and involved adult around who keeps the classroom stocked with a wide range of nourishing books. It is from among books of this quality that the teacher carefully selects those he or she will read aloud. The reading aloud of such books ensures that not only the able reader but the faltering reader too is all the time in contact with stories at his own emotional level.

But at about eleven, children need to range freely—among rubbish if they enjoy it, for even rubbish has its value: it provides something against which they can measure other stories, it is entertaining, and it is ephemerally anarchic. I asked a group of ten-to-eleven year olds if they would make a list for me of what they read *to themselves* in the course of a few weeks. The results were illuminating, heartening, and funny. Listed were science fiction, joke books, family stories, adult detective stories, adventures, comics, information books about hobbies or projects, of course; and the sly reference to "my sister's diary" or "a letter to Mum that I wasn't meant to see." Not a single adolescent novel, I noted. *But* Charlotte Zolotow and Maurice Sendak's *Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present*, Raymond Briggs's silent book *The Snowman*, Dick

Bruna's *Miffy Goes Flying*, Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, and John Burningham's *Would You Rather?* also appeared. These picture books were on the same lists as novels by Philippa Pearce, Nina Bawden, Betsy Byars, J. R. R. Tolkien, Joan Aiken, and Beverly Cleary. This may surprise some of you but not shock you, I hope.

It has taken me a couple of years to break down, in that school, the artificial barriers which publishers, booksellers, and less aware teachers erect between books that look as though they are for the very young, and those that, as blurbs tend to say "ought to be found on every ten-year-old's bookshelf." If a story told in pictures or simple words is more than a "what-happens-next," if it subtly indicates why events occur and how they effect the characters of people (or animals), then that story can fruitfully be read by a child or adult of any age. The advantages to the less able reader of seeing all his peer group handling what might otherwise bear the stigma of baby stuff is, of course, immeasurable. It implies that it is O.K. for him to look at and read it—and that his teachers recognize the value of books of all shapes and kinds, at all levels.

I would love now to regale you, as a reward for following so patiently, with some refreshing anecdotes. But time is short. I promised at the beginning of this paper to bring children with me into the Library of Congress and indeed they have been hovering about giving me guidance all the evening. But because we do not grow out of our love of stories, let me tell you a short tale about our friend Peter Rabbit who has already, I think, scuttered through one sentence tonight and now insists on reappearing.

On one happy morning, a little girl called Sophie brought her pet rabbit to school. He arrived, amid some excitement, with an entourage of thirty stroking, "ah-ing" five year olds in the library at story time, Of course, I had quickly to substitute *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* for whatever I had prepared: a faculty for quick substitution is, I have discovered, one of the linchpins of good teaching. The rabbit was soporific

throughout, whether from too many lettuces or too much stimulation, I do not know. But I was grateful. As you may remember, but in all probability do not, right at the beginning of the story, Mrs. Rabbit "went through the woods to the baker's. She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns." An insignificant statement you and I might think, one quite overtaken in interest and excitement by Peter's daring adventure and his thrilling escape from the pursuing Mr. McGregor. But it was these five currant buns that were the most important element in the story to one listener. That child asked a question which I knew I wasn't supposed to answer. "Do you know why Mrs. Rabbit only bought five currant buns, Miss?"

"You tell me."

"Because there should've been six, because of Mr. Rabbit, but because he had been put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor, Mrs. Rabbit *decided* [note] to buy only five. One for her, one for Flopsy, one for Mopsy, one for Cottontail, and one for Peter."

Now, I am not a great believer in the school of thought that presses for stories to be written for this or that therapeutic purpose, though I understand, and sympathize with, the motives behind the pressure. I go along with Ezra Jack Keats on this matter; he once said to me that "what we must do is reveal people to one another and hope." There speaks the creative man who realizes that implicit in many stories not specifically tailored for any group need is the very comfort and reassurance looked for by the political activist. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, on that morning in my library, was many things besides a good story: nature study, an arithmetic lesson, an occasion for juvenile logic, and an introduction to the rudiments of good housekeeping. You don't go buying a currant bun for a father who is already in a pie. (Beatrix Potter would have liked that.) But has the group that puts pressure on us to provide stories for single-parent families or tales that help children come to terms with death discovered *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, I wonder? I have no doubt that any child with only one parent listening to the story would, if his

situation bothered him, have derived comfort from the security of the rabbit-hole "in the sandbank underneath the root of a very big fir tree." Children are so much better than we are at sensing connections—and the less we investigate the way they digest and build on what they hear, the better, generally speaking. Which is why it is the children's right to be the audience for a story and to be left in peace to work out for themselves its relevance to their inner lives.

So children listen—either to an author's voice at one remove through the reader-aloud or directly, through words read silently, words which fall like snowflakes on the mind. Authors' voices are many and varied, like those of friends, family, people in the street. Children make bonds with the author, creating, as many critics have pointed out, the "other end" of the relationship that the author offers. No one is an uncle unless he has a niece or nephew; consequently C. S. Lewis in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* depends, for his existence as a storyteller, on a willing extended family of nieces and nephews, receptive to his unquestionably avuncular tone. Lucy Boston, austere, dependable, wise-with-age like "Green Knowe" itself, must have families of great-grandchildren she has never met, the children who experience the sacred house and garden along with Tolly in the books. Philippa Pearce, remembering so exactly the workings of a ten-year-old's mind, the total absorption in the passing minute, the quick association of clue with problem, simply needs friends along the street, and of these she has an abundance.

The voice is important, and distinctive voices often spring from a circumscribed locality. A great deal has been written in the past about the vernacular and its place—as vital color or barrier to comprehension—in children's stories. I can remember reading *What Katy Did, Little Women,* and *The Girl of the Limberlost* as a child and being vaguely aware that they weren't British, but far from being troubled by the occasional strange (to me) turns of phrase, I was, I think, excited by the new cadences. Fluent readers can take on stories from overseas with no trouble at all. We should not underestimate them.

But we must provide books for them, wherever they are, and for every other kind of reader, too. And it is here that I must begin to round off my remarks on the audience for children's books generally by examining for a few minutes the ways in which we in Britain try to reach our children with the books that exist there in bewildering profusion.

Britain is a country whose length you could cover in the time it takes to get from Washington to Chicago. This means that, given some organization and a handful of eccentric individuals with a passion for children's reading, the distribution of books and knowledge about them, throughout the country, is not impossible, as it would not be impossible in, say, New England.

We *have* a nucleus of such people, some of whom work voluntarily for long hours, some of whom work for long hours for a small salary, and none of whom earn the large salary commanded by a full-scale academic appointment. So that whereas we have virtually nobody of academics teaching children's literature to adults and writing about it for them (a *lack*), we do have several organizations full of enthusiasts who try to spread the word to children, along with their parents and teachers.

We have the Federation of Children's Book Groups, founded by Anne Wood. This is a national body that fosters children's book groups in cities, towns, and villages throughout the country. Book fairs and talks by publishers or authors are part of every group's program, and a chatty, totally unprofessional but vitally important magazine, *Books for Your Children*, run separately from the federation, aims to make parents feel that having books around the house is as important to their families' well-being as having food, clothes, and toys.

Then we have the School Bookshop Association, the brainchild of Peter Kennerley. This, with *its* journal *School Bookshop News*, helps every school in the country that has a teacher or a librarian prepared to take up the challenge to set up within that school a bookshop. There is no overall pattern: some schools have the shop, or stall, open every lunchtime,

some once a week, some just twice a term. But the very presence of such a focus means many things: new books, in paperback mostly, can be looked at and bought in places where children naturally are (most children are not, in the natural order of things, to be found in good bookshops). Parents not only see the books but get to talk about them with their children and the teachers. I run such a bookshop in the school where I work and even if, on a Wednesday afternoon, I were to sell nothing at all, it would be worth opening up so that the children could handle the books, chat about them with each other, bring in their younger brothers and sisters and their Mums and Dads to talk to us. Bring in, I said, because my mind was frozen into the winter experience. In the summer I set up the bookstall in the playground, and our sales extend and increase. For there is unquestionably a fear amongst unbookish people of going *into* a bookshop.

If you take the bookshop to them, in the playground, in a park, in a dockside market (I've tried all three), exciting developments follow. Community publishing, in multiethnic inner city areas, plays a large role in the success of such ventures, for books of poems and stories written by or about local children and published in paper covers make instant contact with the busy shopper who might otherwise be a passerby. That we can put beside these books paperback editions of Ezra Jack Keats's *Whistle for Willie*, Louise Fitzhugh's *Nobody's Family's Going to Change*, Rosa Guy's *The Friends* is your contribution to our enterprise, for our own national publishing in the multicultural field is still embryonic, though showing signs of growing naturally and healthily.

People are interested in books; but books, on the whole, don't go out to meet people. National Book League Exhibitions *do*. As you know, I am responsible at the moment for the National Book League's "Children's Books of the Year Exhibition" and its catalog. I believe passionately in exhibitions of children's books where admission is free and no one is expected to pay for the book-based entertainments provided for

the children. The exhibition is a display of about three hundred new books, one in ten of the three thousand published in the current year. All of these three hundred books can be handled, sat down with, and *read*. While the exhibition is in London (late July and early August) we have original illustrations from the books on the walls, we have storytellers, author visits, and artists drawing and painting with the children. We also have competitions for which Book Tokens (that is, stamps with a certain value that can be exchanged for a book at any bookshop in the country) are given as prizes. It seemed quite natural to me when I began this exhibition with the 1970 books that children would come; and I only stress here that they *do* come, *do* enjoy themselves, *are* occupied while their elders make book lists or talk to us at the Information Point, because I know their presence strikes the many Americans who visit the exhibition as unusual. They are also astonished to discover that this, and other National Book League Exhibitions, are available for hire, and that therefore the books travel up and down our *little* (I stress the word again because it is important to do so here) country and can be seen in outlying districts, even on islands such as Guernsey.

As I said at the beginning, my work in the children's book field has always been with children and books. This has meant a strange career, if you can dignify such a haphazard existence with so grandiose a term. By happy accident my experience has taken *me* full circle—from being a teacher-librarian in my twenties, into every corner of the children's book world from authorship to exhibition making, and now back into the educational world that makes use of, or fails to make use of, the books we all help to produce.

Specialist, no. Polymath, yes.

So let me finish with a quotation from a British polymath of the first order, Sybil Marshall, who found herself responsible alone for the schooling of an entire community in East Anglia during World War II and taught her children through music, art, and literature all that they needed to prepare them for a mature and fruitful life.[3] On the radio, a few weeks ago, I

heard Sybil Marshall talking about children's reading development. There are, she said, three stages: the on-the-lap stage, the over-lap stage, and the lap-it-up stage.

I have concentrated purposely on the audience for children's books that is still on-the-lap, and the audience at the over-lap stage, where reading aloud to children is still important even if they are already, in Russell Hoban's term, "self-winding." If we were to direct such resources as we have to these two stages, the third, the lap-it-up stage would become the norm. Then the child whose reading at between ten and eleven ranged freely among *real* children's books, you will remember, would emerge from the chrysalis stage, where heroes and strong narrative are necessary, into a butterfly ready for the extended demands of adolescent and adult fiction.

If we fail, as I fear we largely do, at the first two stages, we can be sure that the politicians will throw their resources not into the early years of education, in which adult expertise in profusion might create healthy caterpillars (Very Hungry at this juncture), but into fixing some sort of artificial wings onto the disabled butterfly, the illiterate or antiliterate adolescent who is in their terms a blot on society.

Prevention is better than cure. Believing this so strongly, I have limited my remarks tonight to what may seem to those of you who publish for the teenage market or teach adolescents to be a foreshortened interpretation of the subject.

But the Library of Congress, in its wisdom, astutely chose as the title of the International Year of the Child Symposium "The Audience for *Children's* Books." What an opportunity! Mr. Chairman, I thank you most sincerely for inviting me to participate.

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1. Eveline C. Godley, "A Century of Children's Books," in *National Review* 47 (May 1906): 437-39. Reprinted in *A Peculiar Gift*, ed. Lance Salway (London: Kesrrel, 1976).
2. Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literary* (London: Penguin Pelican, 1958), p. 338.
3. Sybil Marshall, *An Experiment in Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

THE AUDIENCE FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

Remarks by
BARBARA ROLLOCK

It is tempting to make a simplistic statement in order to prove that the audience for children's books is alive, well, and vast in number by simply quoting one statistic from the area in which I have some familiarity, the New York City metropolitan libraries. It would certainly be impressive to tell you that more than five million children's books were borrowed from the three major public libraries in that city during the past year, 1978. But my reading reveals a disturbing number of well-placed articles in periodicals and daily newspapers in recent years about a ubiquitous "Johnny" who "can't read," who isn't reading, or "who could but wouldn't read" because of a litany of factors ranging from the derelictions of educators to changes in our society and including varying combinations of external influences which are affecting his intellectual or emotional growth.

If we are to consider, then, the readership or audience for children's books, our focus must be on those influences which either promote or militate against a meaningful interaction between the reader and his or her books. We must explore the deterrents to reading as well as those experiences which stimulate reading interest. Finally, we need to identify the nature of the audience.

TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

To many, the new technology is the protagonist in the modern cautionary tale if not the multiple-headed monster which has brought about irreparable damage to the potential readers of the day. They describe this electronic age as an era of intellectual passivity and see our children's membership in an essentially literate society threatened. The fact that preschoolers have been found to spend nearly two-thirds of their waking hours before a television set or seven hours a day observ-

ing the tube—and an escalating rate applies to those who enter school—means there is little time for books during leisure hours.

Marie Winn, in her book *The Plug-In Drug*, particularly deplores the medium's impact on the child during the preschool years, the period when much mental development is possible and the child's capacity to learn is greatest. While critics of television point to the failure of the medium to properly use its potential for education, few suggest its complete elimination as Ms. Winn does.

Advocates point to the success of "Sesame Street" and related programs which have involved preschoolers in word recognition and to the book-based dramas that have produced increased requests in libraries for titles after their appearance on a television show. Some can even point to children who have learned to read as a result of their viewing. Even I remember a teenage friend of mine some years ago telling of her four-year-old brother who often shared a place in front of the set with his father when the Westerns were being shown. Imagine her amazement when she discovered one day, printed in large crayoned letters on the base of a photograph of herself that she had given to her brother to keep, the words: "Wanted, Dead or Alive!" Of course this was a home where books were plentiful too, and bedtime was set aside for reading aloud and sharing favorite picture books. While the magic of instant replay would have been appreciated in that household, the infinite repeat possibilities of the book were firmly recognized.

Attempts to shield children from so-called contemporary distractions have not prevented them from coexisting with them. The question in our time is how to live compatibly with the fruits of the printing press and the ever burgeoning nonprint technology, the way our children do. Need one exclude the other?

One thing is certain, television has redefined our concept of communication. Although restraints have been urged on the industry in areas of advertising and program content, particu-

larly with the child viewer in mind, subjects once taboo are nevertheless still readily visible "in living color" in the form of entertainment or information on a telecast. Little wonder then that authors now feel free to explore subjects with a candor never before possible and find that their younger readers are more receptive to the fare than their parents or teachers are.

If "art" indeed "anticipates life," television, it is felt, has somewhat diminished the anticipatory quality and resulted in a viewing and reading audience which is making new demands. According to Winn, for example, television has affected how much children read and the how and what they read has even affected their other skills and abilities. So far, however, no one has proved that the reading audience has vanished, merely that its demands have changed and that television has been an important factor in effecting that change.

CHANGES IN SOCIETY

The media and communication explosion of the last two decades has telescoped the far reaches of the universe. Wars and economic disasters are no longer contained within the boundaries of some distant province but extend, and become global concerns. Here in this country, the waves of social and economic change resulted in a reshaping of thought and life-styles. For example, the sixties brought a new awareness of the culture of minority groups, and emphasis on racial and ethnic identity became fashionable. You may have been reading as I have the current three-part article in *The New Yorker* magazine which traces the changes in writing in the textbooks on U.S. history.[1] The author discusses how the tenor of the times dictated content in the texts, how attitudes toward groups of people changed and were reflected in newer editions, and how omissions of past history were conspicuous by their absence. This, essentially, is also the history of children's books.

Government financing and attention to programs of social reform reached their peak in this country during the sixties. This was a time too for experimentation on the educational

front. Schools and libraries were extending their physical walls and exposing children to a variety of options in the learning experience. There was a proliferation of programs offering a chance for many to enter the mainstream of intellectual and cultural opportunity. There were programs for the "disadvantaged" preschooler, multimedia programs for the child of the television era, and programs incorporating the use of both the hardware and software of the new technology to meet the needs of a more nonprint-oriented society. This programming, of course, directly affected publications for children.

For programs which had as their principal goal the provision of books for households formerly devoid of them, paperback publications became the most economical breakthrough. Printing of paperbacks made books more readily accessible to masses of children and increased the quantity of books in school and classroom collections. Easier reading materials were produced to entice the more reluctant Johnny or his female counterparts, and special materials were developed to meet the challenge of the greater visual literacy of today's child.

There was a definite interest too in the needs of the non-English-speaking child and a spate of programs inspired the publication of more translations and books related to the bilingual educational concept. When studies of the speech patterns of black children from the inner cities of the urban areas and elsewhere revealed the difficulties these children sometimes encountered in reading the Standard English texts, attempts were made in some books for children to approximate this speech as a contemporary language in its own right. John Steptoe's first book *Stevie* and June Jordan's *His Own Where* introduced a new look and a language experience of interest to children and young people of all groups.[2]

Our problems with the American dollar and the attendant retrenchments in programs spelled chaos to some more innovative experiments, but the affluent sixties nevertheless at least highlighted some significant problem areas, not the least of which was the plight of the Johnnies and Janies of our time.

The dilemma arose when the options I mentioned earlier became limited. Economic woes of course influenced the publication scene as far as children's book production was concerned. Shortage of paper also meant higher costs for children's books and affected priorities in what publishers selected to print for children.

THE NATURE OF THE AUDIENCE

This is a natural place to address ourselves to the question of the "audience." I'll start first with the adults, although it is obvious that for purposes of this paper, children are the readers, the real and intended audience about which we speak.

But even though adults play a vital role in the development of children's reading habits and tastes they are often overlooked as part of the audience for children's books. After all, it has been said, there is essentially little fundamental difference between youth and age except for a certain length of experience. It is from this very vantage point of experience that adults make their determinations about what children should read. Although it is not my intention to make adults the villains of the piece, I am sometimes tempted to agree with J. R. R. Tolkiens's observation that "the process of growing older is not necessarily allied to growing wickeder though the two do often happen together." [3]

There are some good and bad things to be said about the adult role in relation to children and their books, since the adult generally introduces, interprets, selects, or writes the books. The adult as parent, educator, librarian, reviewer, publisher, writer, and more often now, psychologist, ultimately controls and determines the *what* and *how many* of the books that are made available to children.

Obviously adults bring different perspectives to their reading of books for children. There are some who see books for the child as a medium strictly for instruction. Others sacrifice quality for mediocrity, for fad, or for the sensational, because these elements in a children's book guarantee instant appeal to children. They seem oblivious to the mind-expanding po-

tential in books. Tolkien has suggested that adults more than children may need these values in reading: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation.

The continuing advocacy for a more values-oriented literature occupies many an adult who feels that absence of a meaningful message in a children's book negates the necessary "massage" for young minds.

As Frances FitzGerald, author of "Onward and Upward with the Arts: History Textbooks," comments about the educational climate for children today, "the study of teaching methods carries with it the assumption that children can and should be manipulated in certain ways. . . . John Dewey was speaking not as educationist but as philosopher in the American tradition when he said that the great discovery of the twentieth century was the child."[4]

Most controversy which has surrounded children's books has arisen from the differences of opinion adults have had about the harmful effects a book may have on a child. How else would one explain the recurring arguments against fairy tales because of their inherent dangers to the child's concept of the real world? It is noteworthy that writers as different in approach as the Russian poet Kornei Chukovsky, writer J. R. R. Tolkien, and more recently, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim have found it necessary to come to the defense of fairy tales as a genre of children's literature.[5] Each has explored either the value of fairy tales for emotional catharsis, their role in the preservation of the culture, or their contribution to the linguistic and imaginative growth of the child. These conclusions are doubly significant when we consider that fairy tales were not initially recorded with children in mind. But every once in a while, a breakthrough occurs and children make their own choices in spite of adult judgments.

In all fairness, however, it must be said that there are some adults who, because they understand and respect children, approach their books with the same care with which they read any work of literature. Some therefore look for good writing style, beauty in language, originality in thought, and other

related elements which illumine the reading experience for the reader. These adults have no difficulty sharing a mutual enjoyment with children.

CHILDREN AS THE AUDIENCE

One of the most popular contemporary authors of children's books, Judy Blume, has described children as "very joyful, humorous" yet, she says, "they feel things very deeply." [6] Perhaps the secret of her current success lies in this perception of the child's capacity for depth of feeling. *What do children read?* For children are indeed still reading and may be identified as the primary audience of children's books. They read "funny books" for they seek humor in a sometimes joyless world—and this may explain the alleged resilience attributed to youth. They read books of information—biographies, science, sports. They read picture books and easy books. Sometimes the Johnny of our tale never goes beyond those easy books. They read fairy tales, reveling in the grimmest of Grimm, the perennial favorites of Perrault, or other tales that feed their taste for fancy. They read mysteries and books in series; Nancy Drew has been rediscovered, unfortunately. (I have read that even trivial books have their significance, but they satisfy rather than broaden.) They read about sex and sexuality according to the gospel of Blume! Good readers read avidly and widely; reluctant readers need constant encouragement.

WHY DO CHILDREN READ?

Some have suggested that children seek truth. Chukovsky has described the child as a "tireless explorer" in the world. I am inclined to think that children read when they see the adults around them read, or when they are read to. They also read because the books are there. I have visited homes where there were no books and looked around as anxious and seemingly caring parents wondered why their children were not reading in their neat, orderly, bookless houses. Children read too to

find answers to their questions and to confirm their observations and the truth of what they have been told. They read for new experiences and for enjoyment, and sometimes they display not only depth of feeling but remarkable understanding. We all know what realists children are, and we know about their keen sense of logic and justice. A colleague of mine was reading Leo Lionni's *Inch by Inch* to a group of three- and four-year-olds. As she displayed the picture of a bird and inchworm together, one child knowingly shook his head and said, "He ate it." He repeated at each turn of the page which showed bird and worm in conversation, "He ate it." But the story ended on a happy note and the child shook his head in obvious disbelief, insisting, "He ate it!" He knew the nature of birds in proximity to worms. For children are not oblivious to the world around them.

We have carefully relegated to children a body of writing and designated it "children's literature." We have already established the fact that fairy tales historically were not meant for children. Most of the hundreds of authors with whom I've spoken through the years agree in principle with P. L. Travers's recent pronouncement that she does not write for children per se.[7] Most authors claim they write for themselves, from memory of a childhood long past, about everyday incidents in their present lives, or from their general observations of the human condition. If this is true, the fact that their books are read by children either attests to the superb marketing efforts of their publishers, or there is a phenomenon overlooked in the adult-child relationship—the fact that children are equal partners in life with us. Tolkien reminds us that "Children are meant to grow up, and not to become Peter Pans. Not to lose innocence and wonder; but to proceed on the appointed journey."

Where does all this place the Johnny of our concern? If he is not part of that five-million statistic, will converting him to become a reader be worth the effort? The seventies already have a different emphasis, one viewed as a reactionary educational move to get back to competence in the three Rs—"the

basics" of years past. A recent experiment in a midwestern school involved principals, teachers, and students in a fifteen-minute pause in the day for reading a book. It reminded me of the rainy days of my elementary school days, when my teacher, a tall nun with merry eyes, reserved time to read aloud to fifty restless young bodies confined indoors. She introduced us to the humor of Chesterton, the adventure in Conrad, the fancy of Stockton. By today's standards some of us were not yet ready for our fifth grade readers. In spite of our initial restlessness, somehow the paper airplanes were not flown, the spitballs and note-passing stopped, and we were privy to a rare listening experience.

I've often thought of those rainy days when I see colleagues hesitate to introduce certain books to children because the child is not ready for a more difficult book. I have been dismayed by the proliferation of easy books to satisfy Johnny's taste almost to the exclusion of the children who become readers and need to continue to find newer and better books. I'm distressed that the media is blamed for the limited time we give to offering listening opportunities, where children may share what they can't read with us.

I have known people who rely on the surefire book rather than risk the challenge of a good story, well written. No wonder Johnny tunes out books. We do need to concern ourselves about him and all he symbolizes. Margaret Meek, in the introduction to *The Cool Web*, a collection of essays subtitled "The Pattern of Children's Reading," states that "By learning to read, the child satisfies the adults around him that he now has access to one of the ways by which his society organizes itself. He satisfies himself that, having mastered a complicated learning task, he can take on others like it. . . . Unable to read, a child or an adult is cut off from a way of entering into the experiences of other people the better to understand his own." [8]

We are learning from authorities like Piaget something about the mental development of the child, but there is still much we don't know about Johnny and others like him that we need to know to help them share as fully as possible in that

richness of understanding that books may help them to achieve. We need to encourage the reading of books that will translate the compassion, the joys, and the laughter and hopes which make us one with another in a common human experience. We need to provide a variety of books from which children may choose if they are to develop into a continuing, intelligent, and discriminating audience. For to the child belongs the most coveted of scenes in the human drama—tomorrow.

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1. Frances FitzGerald, "Onward and Upward with the Arts: History Textbooks," in *The New Yorker*, March 12, 1979; also published in *America Revised* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979).
2. John Steptoe, *Stevie* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), and June Jordan, *His Own Where* (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1971).
3. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (London: Unwin Books, 1975).
4. FitzGerald, "Onward and Upward," p. 104.
5. Kornei Chukovsky, *From Two to Five*, ed. and trans. Miriam Morton, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf;* and Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1976).
6. Judy Blume, "Coming of Age with Judy Blume," in the *New York Times Magazine*, December 3, 1978, p. 80.
7. P. L. Travers, "I Never Wrote for Children," in the *New York Times Magazine*, July 2, 1978, p. 16.
8. Margaret Meek et al., eds., *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading* (New York: Atheneum, 1978).

COMMENTS:

CECILY ANN TRUETT

I am delighted to be here to discuss children's books and reading from the perspective of a person deeply involved in television, for it seems to me that in many ways there can be adversary relationships between children's literature and television and I personally admit to a growing concern about how television affects the audience for children's books.

By the time the average child reaches eighteen, he or she has spent 50 percent more time in front of the television set than in the classroom: more time watching television than doing any other activity in his or her lifetime except sleep. That's very scary. The fact is that television is diverting children from literature. Three-fourths of sixth graders interviewed in a test recently said they discussed television with their friends—75 percent! It's hardly likely that this percentage of kids discuss books they are reading with each other. Of first graders interviewed, 50 percent said they emulated things they saw on television. Statistics about children's literature can't compare with these. There certainly is not this high level of involvement with books, and to me that is frightening.

What kinds of differences do we have between children's television and children's literature? Barbara Rollock men-

tioned Marie Winn's book, *The Plug-In Drug*, and I suggest that everyone read that book. I don't subscribe to all of Marie's premises—but she does make some very good points about how television is physiologically consumed in a manner quite different from the way in which a child "consumes" literature.

One of these differences is that viewing television is a passive activity, as opposed to reading, which is active. I am talking about the processes that go on inside the head. Television—and Marie Wynn stresses this very interesting point—may not appeal to the verbal hemisphere of the brain but rather to the spacial one. Therefore it's possible that the time children are spending in front of the tube, indeed, is not a verbal experience. So our children, supposedly sitting down in front of the television set to absorb facts and information, may in fact not be absorbing anything! A controversial but refreshing perspective!

Another interesting contrast, mentioned by our speakers last night, is that the image on the television screen is fleeting: you can't go back and look at it again—you can't explore it. You don't have time for your own thoughts. In reading, you create a whole world inside the mind and the author becomes the catalyst for that, making reading a personal, creative, and very exciting experience.

Another major difference between books and television is that the television set does not encourage or require interaction among the people who are sitting in front of it. But when people in a family sit down together and read, whether they are each reading individually or whether they're all reading the same thing, there is an opportunity to stop, to interact, to speak, to explore ideas, and to look at the material that's in front of them at their own pace. Television simply hands the audience a program on a silver platter. And so, very often, we find television dividing the family and separating family members from interaction and intercommunication.

The artificial barriers to age that we encountered in Mrs. Moss's remarks last night do not exist in television because in most cases the child becomes the primary selector of programs

and controls the television set. So we find that most children—especially preschoolers—are watching adult, prime time material. We find our children consuming programs designed to attract an adult audience and, therefore, becoming receptive to material that many of us find undesirable, inadvisable, and even unhealthy. We don't have this kind of situation in children's literature because much of the time an adult is involved in the process somewhere along the line—either as teacher or librarian or as parent or friend.

Earlier the concept of reality in children's literature also came up. Do our books give a child enough of a hold on reality? Does children's literature present reality in the proper context? Here again there is a significant difference from television because, when a child reads, he uses his own life experiences *and* the printed word to come up with his concept of what he is reading. There is "a shared reality," if you will, in children's literature. But in television this is not so. On television reality is quite specific, fully provided to a child verbally and visually, and this is very frightening when we realize the tremendous quantity of television children are watching. In this country television is their primary conscious life experience. Most programs last thirty to sixty minutes before resolution, but life isn't like that. We don't solve our life's problems in half an hour or sixty minutes. I am afraid that through many television programs we are teaching our children false values and giving them unreal concepts of time and a misrepresentation of the experience of life.

Now it may sound very incongruous for a television producer to sit here and talk about the "evils" of the medium, but anyone in television who does not see its problems is kidding himself. Now, however, I would like to move in another direction and discuss ways in which television is being used to try to promote reading and expand the audience for children's books. There are three particular projects that I think are notable.

"Cover-to-Cover" is a series of thirty-two fifteen-minute television capsules that profile a book, giving youngsters part

of the story and then encouraging them to finish the book on their own. It's very interesting to see how this project has worked. The Walter S. Boardman Elementary School in Oceanside, New York, under the direction of principal Barbara Brody, used "Cover-to-Cover" in an experimental program with fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. The children saw the television program and then worked closely with the school librarian, who made sure the books were available immediately after the TV program. There was a notable impact not only on the kids, but also on the school itself. For example, the second series of "Cover-to-Cover" was cancelled for the sixth graders because teachers thought they were a little too old for the series, but the youngsters came to the principal with a petition explaining why the series should be continued. As a result, "Cover-to-Cover"was retained for the sixth graders. Then there were projects where the kids produced their own programs—not for television, since they didn't have the taping equipment, but for classroom presentation in a "Cover-to-Cover" format. That was very exciting, and soon a creative writing course was initiated to help the kids start writing their own stories. So "Cover-to-Cover" had a tremendous impact at Boardman Elementary.

This was a significant case where television was used as a catalyst, as a stimulus for reading and for other creative activities. But there are problems with projects of this type, problems of money and of equipment. Most schools don't have the money, the time, or the technical expertise to use television like this. There are problems of "prescribed programming" and many other obstacles. But projects such as "Cover-to-Cover" hold great promise.

Another project involves the use of television scripts. Michael McAndrew of Capital Cities Television Productions, working with television networks, developed a project in the Philadelphia school system whereby children were given actual TV scripts before a commercial broadcast. Two of the programs, for example, were "Eleanor and Franklin" and "The Missiles of October." During the six-month period tests indi-

cated that the children had advanced in their reading levels up to five years. Now I admit to some skepticism about this test result, but I'm not familiar enough with the situation to make a serious criticism. It is a fact, however, that the children did read the scripts, that they read them along with the television program, and that in this project television became more of a participatory and a verbal experience than usual. It is another promising experiment in the right direction.

Then there is our own project. We at "Studio See" decided that we'd like to use television as a jumping-off point to get children involved in reading. Very briefly, our program is a documentary magazine program produced on location all over the United States: we "profile" youngsters in the twelve- to sixteen-year-old age group, letting the youngsters tell us about themselves in their own words. There aren't any scripts. In this way we use television as a window in the classroom, taking youngsters to other locations to meet other people, to experience other dialects, other viewpoints, and other lifestyles. We thought that perhaps we could use this instance of sharing small bits of reality to encourage youngsters to read and so, under a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, we were able to provide ancillary teaching materials and to locate junior high schools across the country that were interested in using our program for this purpose. We provided reading lists and bibliographies for topics discussed on "Studio See," which of course includes everything from snakes and rock climbing to scuba diving. We emphasized the most popular—and talked-about—subjects.

The results of the project were mixed. We didn't, first of all, have enough time to measure the response over a long period of time. But we did find that while kids were stimulated to investigate subject areas that they hadn't looked at before, they really were not checking the books out at the library as we hoped they would. Our program lasted for a year. Unfortunately it was very loosely controlled because we could not get to the classrooms across the country and see how the show was actually being used. We are not discouraged, however, be-

cause we knew from the beginning that this was only an experiment. And we do know from this and the other projects that, when used properly, television can be a most effective tool in encouraging youngsters to read. We just need to explore it more.

COMMENTS:

ANN DURELL

I am going to make a statement that may surprise those of you who have heard me speak within the last six months, and that is that I think there *is* an audience for children's books. I will now share with you my recent experiences which have led me to this startling conclusion.

Experience number one. I was riding on a Fifth Avenue bus one day and noticed a little girl and her mother sitting next to me. The little girl was about three years old and the mother had a toy that she was sharing with her—a very elaborate and expensive toy, a plastic clock filled with marbles that rolled around the clock and all its interior cogs and wheels. The little girl was studying the clock with total fascination.

Suddenly her finger moved down to the lower right-hand corner where there was a tiny bit of type on a label—and she said, "Read!"

Her mother ignored her. At that point, the bus began to get crowded, and the mother put the toy back in the original box so she could put her little girl on her lap to make room for an adult who was standing. The little girl then looked at the *box*, which the mother was now holding on her lap and on which there was lots of type, and said, insistently, "Read that!"

And so the mother finally read one word. Very haltingly. Now, my other ear, that of a Literacy Volunteer tutor, was listening, and by then I suspected that the mother was probably one of the one in five adults in New York City who are functionally illiterate.

The second story. I was on the subway and two little girls and their father got on and sat down. Without a word the smaller child, who I suppose was about seven years old, hauled a shopping bag up onto her lap, pulled out a pair of glasses and a copy of the *Cricket in Times Square*, and handed them to her twelve-year-old sister, who put on the glasses and started to read the book. The little girl then dipped into her shopping bag again and pulled out a copy of a Beverly Cleary book and started to read—and when I left the train, they were both still sitting there reading very intently.

Those were my two experiences with the obviously extant children's book audience. The third reason that I think children will read, and that there is an audience for children's books, is someone whose name was mentioned last night, and that someone is Judy Blume. I cite her because her books are proof that children will read with passion and with interest, that they care about books as much, I dare say, as they care about any television program that they see and very possibly much more.

We must remember not to be too grand about books. Except for those rare and wonderful books that can be termed "works of art," they are a form of communication. Books still work. They provide instantly retrievable information. You can look at a book; you can find your place in it again and again; you can carry it conveniently; you don't have to have a big expensive machine to show it; and it's still relatively cheap, as things go in this world.

As I said to Barbara Rollock, in regard to statistics we can cite, if I can see two children reading on a subway in New York, then it's perfectly valid for me to say that there is still an audience for children's books. In fact, as long as there is *one* child left who can read, I contend that there is an audience for children's books. And that books are a valid medium.

My fear in regard to this medium is that the "thorny hedge" around the princess is not composed just of critics but of all adults who are keeping children from their kingdom, the kingdom that is rightfully theirs. I am an editor, and I can tell you

that authors write for editors—and editors publish for librarians. Because we all do it to make money.

It is very difficult for me to know what children would like to read, no matter how much I want to know what children want to read. I can only guess by, interestingly enough, sales statistics. Because if books are circulated and they wear out, children, you can be fairly certain, are using them. The first copy, no, but if they go on selling, then children are reading them.

The other way is through paperbacks and paperback sales. I will say parenthetically to Elaine Moss that in this country those adolescent anguish novels, as I call them, are really read by children. They sell by the tens of thousands in paperback. So one knows that in fact the kids in this country love them, and these are eleven- and twelve-year-olds. That's really what they want to read about—all the horrible things that are going to happen to them when they're fourteen!

The reason I care about audience is because I care very, very much about children. I care more about children, I think, than I ever have in my life. I am deeply worried about what our society is doing to children, generally, and the best way I can address myself to that is through books, and caring about getting books to children.

COMMENTS:

ETHEL L. HEINS

Let me begin with two brief comments about television, starting with Marie Winn's statement about the two parts of the brain. There are others who have studied this question and who agree with her. For example, Matina Horner, president of Radcliffe, is a psychologist, and she too has stated her opinion that in today's society the part of a child's brain that responds to verbal stimuli is in danger of being slowly atrophied and the

part that responds to visual stimuli is probably being overdeveloped.

One other thing I might say about television is that I heard Marshall McLuhan talk about three years ago, and I think we have a distorted idea of McLuhan's own personal views—or at least of his views today. He talked about the dehumanizing effect of television. For example, when a man watches a baseball game on television, he does not respond as he would if he were physically at the game; there is a dehumanizing effect that comes from staring at the small screen, an effect that does not take place if one is actually at the game. McLuhan ended his lecture by deploring this situation and said something like "if you want to save civilization, pull out all the plugs." This was a great surprise to me, because I had read so much of McLuhan's writing and so much about him.

I'd also like to mention that the United States commissioner of education recently, if belatedly, got around to saying that our children will not become good readers if no one reads to them at home. Furthermore, he urged parents not only to read to their children but also to use bookshelves—not for knickknacks and plastic flowers, but for books! This sort of obvious statement, handed down from on high, may not impress any of us, but it possibly will impress people who are not used to books and who really have not been exposed to books. I was glad to see it.

Last night Elaine Moss referred to the thorny hedge which is separating the child from the book. She felt, if I heard her correctly, that it was somewhat the fault of the critics, the academics, who are concerned with children's literature as an academic subject. I, too, am opposed to an overacademic approach, the kind that produces yards and yards of writing to analyze one small aspect of one small book and ignores the child reader. But I feel that in this country, what is formally separating the child from the book far more than the academic critic is the educationist. I feel very strongly about this, and I speak from experience. I worked very happily in a prestigious school system for twelve long years and felt, when I left,

that I had brainwashed some people and had been able to accomplish certain goals, but I also left with a very realistic view of the American school teacher and the American school system.

Now, librarians and others have brought about many great and marvelous changes, and today we have teachers working with books and with librarians in ways that twenty-five or thirty years ago were beyond our fondest hopes. However, many teachers are still hung up in the jargon. If you look through the education magazines, you will still find articles like "An Analysis of the Syntactical Complexity of Newbery Medal Books." And these are written by teachers and educators and not by academic critics.

This particular approach, which I term the educationist's point of view, bothers me. Of course many teachers don't share this point of view, praise be, but thousands still do. Books are to be picked apart and dispensed like pills for specific illnesses; they are not to be accepted wholeheartedly and with joy. The National Council of Teachers of English, an organization I am a member of and criticize occasionally, has just come out with still another book on "responses of children to books," starting with Beatrix Potter and ending up with many standard library books. Why was Mrs. Rabbit annoyed with Peter? is a typical question. And the National Council of Teachers of English is an enormously prolific publisher. These things bother me, and they have always bothered me, and they probably always will bother me.

Now I'd like to discuss the whole *Nancy Drew* syndrome. The Nancy Drew books and the Hardy Boys books bring out what is so desperately needed in all of this work with children and with books: the need for the involvement and help of human beings who care. If you offer children tons of Nancy Drew or if they find nothing else by themselves, that is one thing. But if you have some Nancy Drew books and you care about a child and that child knows you care, then you're going to go on and move the child, from Nancy Drew to authors like Beverly Cleary, perhaps. That's what you do, and that is

why we so desperately need adults or even high school students working with children, discussing their reading, and encouraging them along the way. You must have adult commitment and concern.

Which brings me to some of my bitter feelings about what is happening because of taxpayers' revolts and because of philosophical questions in public and school library service—the cutting off, once again, of the child from the book. One of our great problems is the decline in children's use of libraries, a decline closely connected with the deterioration of children's services in libraries and the lack of book selection in some large libraries. What has happened to the vision which propelled library service in this country to the point where it was able to inspire the world? This vision is now absent. We are even in danger of losing the concept of the free public library; because of taxpayers' revolts, libraries have begun to talk about having even *children* use libraries on a paying basis. All of these things are very frightening to me, and they particularly frighten me in the International Year of the Child.

Of course, we are making certain gains and I'd like to conclude by telling you about some work I've been doing in the city of Newton, Massachusetts, where I live. When I was a school librarian, I experimented with paperback book fairs—this was about ten years ago, before the school bookshop movement began in England. They were incredibly successful. We were able to sell sometimes $1,000-worth of paperbacks in two days, and when paperbacks were not $2 but about 75 cents or 95 cents apiece, this was a prodigious number of books. Children would save their money and come in waving $10 bills and say, "This is my allowance for x number of weeks," and in September they would start to haunt me and say, "When is the book fair?"

I'm no longer in a school, but now there are evening book fairs sponsored by the Newton PTA. The children's librarian of the public library and I have developed a successful project. We divide the audience in half; I take the parents and talk to them about children's reading on a basic level. I talk about

the good old days, when family meals were rituals and not just a way of stuffing food in quickly, when reading aloud was something that was done in families. And I say that reading aloud can bind whole generations together now, at a time when generations are almost hopelessly split apart. At the book fair the children's librarian takes the children to another part of the school and tells stories. Or, we've also done it the other way around—I've done the storytelling, and she has talked to the parents. Then both parents and children are set loose on what is literally the most magnificent smorgasbord of paperbacks I have ever seen. We have a very fine children's bookshop in Brookline that furnishes beautiful paperback books. The children are then turned loose, and they pull my sleeve and say, "Hey, I forgot your name, but will you pick me out a good book to read?"

My final plea concerns book distribution. Why in this country do we not *bring* good books to people? There are so many people who cannot get to a bookshop. In fact, there are thousands of people who wouldn't be caught dead in a bookshop because it's terrifying to them, because it's something strange and exotic. And why do we not sell good children's books at supermarkets? We know that supermarkets sell books. They have endless dreary sets of encyclopedias, they have sets of dictionaries, and they have all the sensational stuff for adults displayed near the checkout counter. They even have the modern version of the old cheap flats. But they don't have good children's books! What can we do?

SYMPOSIUM DISCUSSION

Approximately sixty participants, including representatives of the Library of Congress Children's Literature Center and the Children's Literature Section in the Subject Cataloging Division, attended the March 13 symposium and took part in the discussion. Chairman Robert Hale called on Cecily Truett, Ann Durell, and Ethel L. Heins for their prepared comments and on Elaine Moss and Barbara Rollock for additional remarks before asking symposium participants for their questions and observations. The lively and wide-ranging discussion amplified topics already considered, posed questions for future debate, introduced new subjects, and provided participants with an opportunity to exchange ideas and information about organizations with active children's book programs. The activities of the following groups were described in the course of the discussion: the American Reading Council, the School Bookshop Association (Great Britain), Reading Is Fundamental, Inc., the National School Volunteer Program, the Children's Literature Center in the Library of Congress, and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Other topics of discussion included adult use of television as a babysitter or "substitute parent"; the mistaken tendency of many adults to view childhood as a "monolithic entity";

terminology and definition problems such as "children's literature" versus "children's books" and the "library" versus "media center"; the artificiality of distinctions among the terms "children," "young adult," and "adult"; current trends in the publishing and marketing of children's books, especially the slow market for backlist books that have been out more than eighteen months; the inaccessibility of good children's books in many parts of the country; the lack of adult knowledge (outside the book world) about what good children's books are available—and how to obtain them; ways of reducing many people's reluctance to go into bookstores; the display of children's books in bookstores; and how distribution techniques used for products such as underwear and stockings might be applied to the distribution of good children's books.

Also discussed were the influence of school curriculum and teacher training on the teaching of reading; the differences between teaching children to read and conveying to them a love of literature; the use of instructional, "how-to" books in teaching children to read; U.S. participation in the International Year of the Child, 1979; picture books—"are they leading to reading or are they leading to television?"; prizes for children's books and whether they serve a useful function or simply encourage an elitist attitude among concerned adults, such as authors, librarians, publishers, and booksellers; the importance of academic, and especially historical, study of children's books; the role of textbooks in encouraging and discouraging reading; lessons the United States might learn from other countries, and especially from the children's book movement in Great Britain; the editing and reviewing of children's books; the general neglect of children's poetry and verse; the virtues and vices of adolescent series such as the Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys books; and the tendency of parents to equate education with the word "book."

The discussion concluded with remarks by Virginia Haviland, chief, Children's Literature Center, and John Y. Cole, executive director, Center for the Book.

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